

The Holy Spirit in the Last Days

Introduction

Scores of Biblical illustrations relate to the agrarian life of the people of yesteryear. A word often borrowed is “*harvest*.” It refers not only to their crops but frequently represents the **saints** who will be “gathered up” at the end of time (the “*harvest*”).

- “Therefore said he [Christ] unto them, The **harvest** truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the **harvest**, that he would send forth labourers into **his harvest**” (Luke 10:2). The crop is large – more field workers are needed.
- “And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud [Christ], **Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe**” (Revelation 14:14-15).
 - a) The *white cloud* alludes to the Second Coming. The “crop” is ready for harvesting.
 - b) “**And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other**” (Matthew 24:31 – KJV). The “*four winds*” symbolize the four directions of the compass.

When the harvest occurs, Christ assumes dominion over His kingdom of saints (Daniel 7:13-14; cf. Revelation 11:15).

Intriguingly, there were different kinds of major harvests in Palestine. They, in turn, became prophetic symbols for groups of people at the end of time.

- **Righteous:**
 1. Barley harvest – Spring – right at Passover – it became a “*wave sheaf*.”
 - It represents the 144,000 – those who are ready first and who finish the work.
 2. Wheat harvest – Early summer – right after the Feast of Weeks, beginning at the same time as Pentecost
 - It represents the great multitude that are converted from the witnessing of the 144,000.
- **Wicked:**
 1. Grape harvest – Those who resist God’s grace and then become subject to God’s wrath (Revelation 14:18-20).
 - That judgment begins just before Jesus returns (Rev 8, 9, 11, 15-16). Then, there will be no turning back. Their eternal destiny is fixed.

For each crop to sprout and eventually ripen, rain is required. **The Bible uses rain as one of several symbols for the Holy Spirit.** In the near east, each of those two rainy seasons became a symbol for a special spirit endowment. That became a representation for the spiritual refreshing and maturing of those two groups of His people!

1. **Early Rain** – winter rains (October/November to February/March). The **barley** sprouted and was brought to harvest – the 144,000 – by this single rain.
2. **Latter Rain** – early summer rains (April/May to May/June). The **wheat** had already sprouted by the winter early rains. This new moisture now ripens and brings this grain to harvest – the great multitude.

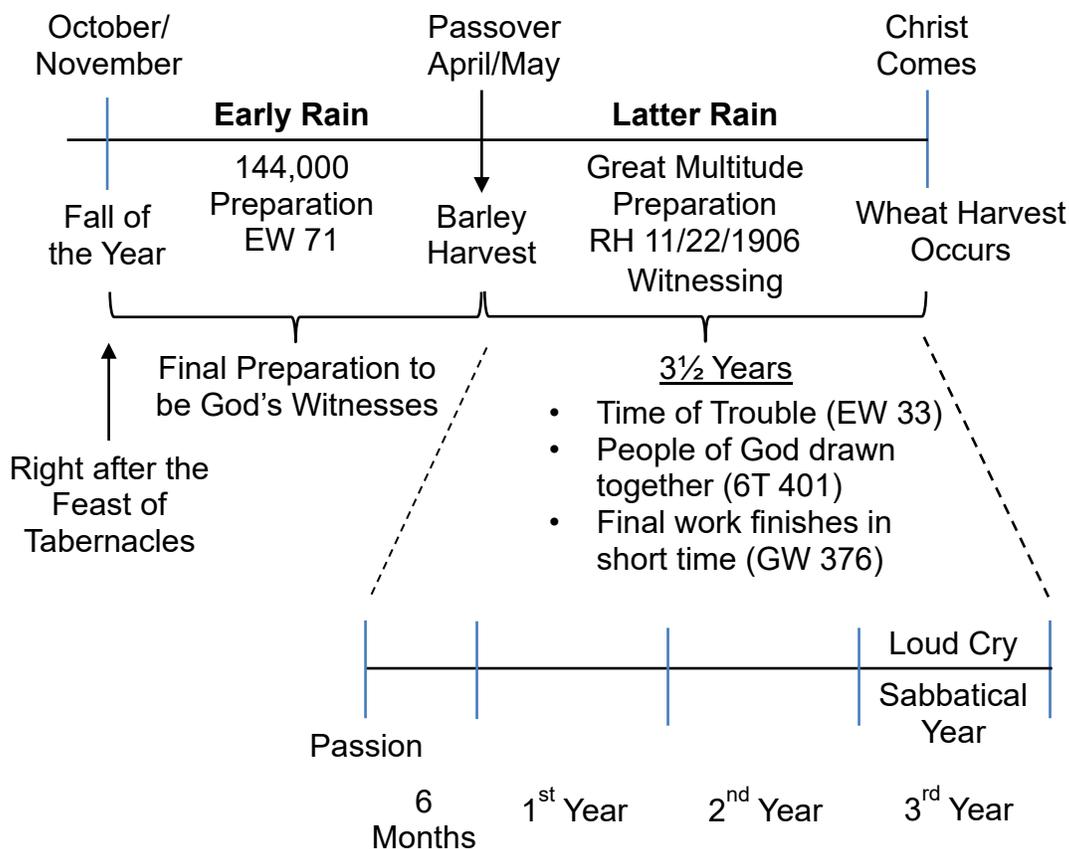
Related to the **end of time** are Old Testament “rain” prophecies that refer to the Holy Spirit:

1. “Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.... Then shall we know, **if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth**” (Hosea 6:1, 3; cf. Zechariah 10:1).
2. “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for **the day of the LORD cometh**, for it is nigh at hand; ... Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the **former rain** moderately, and **he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain**” (Joel 2:1, 23).

Joel explains further the symbolic meaning of this rain: “**And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; ... it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered**” (Joel 2:28, 32a).

Again, in prophecy, “rain” represents the Holy Spirit. But why two rain showers at the end?

A graphic outline of the brief period just before Christ returns:



“The blessings received under the **former rain** [early rain] are needful to us to the end.... As we seek God for the Holy Spirit, it will work in us meekness, humbleness of mind, a conscious dependence upon God for the perfecting **latter rain**.”¹

“The ripening of the grain represents the completion of the work of God's grace in the soul. By the power of the Holy Spirit the moral image of God is to be perfected in the character. We are to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ.”²

An Example of this Spiritual “Rain”

The story of Pentecost is a wonderful introduction to what it will be like at the end when the gospel will reach every person on the globe.

- “*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. **And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost**, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4).*

¹ *Last Day Events*, p. 187 (TM 507, 509, 1897).

² *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 506.

- Only a few Biblical illustrations state that people were “*filled*” with the Holy Spirit, as here (e.g., John the Baptist, his mother and father – Luke 1:15, 44, 67). Jesus was “*full*” of the Holy Ghost (Luke 4:1). This Pentecost experience ***filled*** all those in that place!
- Peter said that Pentecost was a fulfillment of Joel’s rain (Acts 2:16-21). Yet, we know that the greater picture of that prophecy is yet to occur.

The apostle-led evangelism was filled with Spirit-driven signs and wonders. There were thousands of converts, even in one day. People heard the message in their own language!

How globally effective was that *outpouring* of the Spirit?

- “*If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and **be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister***” (Colossians 1:23).
Stunning!
- Why didn’t Jesus come then, according to Matthew 24:14? There were other prophecies that God said needed to be fulfilled. His redemptive plan was not yet complete. That gospel of saving grace is yet to go again to the whole world.
- The full manifestation of Jesus’ redemptive plan means that it must be heard and understood by all. Additionally, who Satan ***really is*** must yet become more apparent (cf. Revelation 12).

That apostolic “*rain*” experience is a model of what will soon happen to God’s people (Revelation 11:4-6). Prophecy often carries a dual meaning (applied to the time it was given and at the end of time). One important Holy Spirit prophecy example:

- “*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, **when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began***” (Acts 3:19-21).
- The words “*times of refreshing*” refer to another period in earth’s history when there will be a Pentecostal type of experience that finishes the gospel work.
“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24:14). That is the final application.

That “*early*” or “*former*” apostolic rain is still vital for us to experience today, however, to prepare for the “*latter rain*”:

“There must be no neglect of the grace represented by the former rain. Only those who are living up to the light they have will receive greater light. Unless we are daily advancing in the exemplification of the active Christian virtues, we shall not recognize the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain. It may be falling on hearts all around us, but we shall not discern or receive it.”³

³ *Maranatha*, p. 219.

“The latter rain, ripening earth’s harvest, represents the spiritual grace that prepares the church for the coming of the Son of man. But unless the former rain has fallen, there will be no life; the green blade will not spring up. Unless the early showers have done their work, the latter rain can bring no seed to perfection.”⁴ This alludes to the final “*wheat*” harvest.

Another Symbol – Oil

Oil is widely understood as another symbol for the Holy Spirit.

- It was used for anointing (I Samuel 10:1, II Kings 9:3, Leviticus 8:30, Isaiah 51:1), setting someone or something aside for a heaven-ordained mission.
- Jesus said: “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath **anointed me** to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised*” (Luke 4:18).

Through the Holy Spirit’s anointing, Christ was given special power, as a man:

1. To preach the gospel
2. To heal
3. To preach deliverance
4. To preach recovery of spiritual insight
5. To set free them that are oppressed

In ancient times the word “*anoint*” (*chrío* – khree-o) often meant “smearing on” or “rubbing on” oil, setting them aside for a special mission. In New Testament times, it often signified the endowment of the Holy Spirit – as here with Christ.

Zechariah had a vision (Zechariah 4:2-6) in which he saw a solid gold lampstand with seven lights and a bowl on top. From that bowl, assumed to contain oil, were seven pipes to each light.

- An angel said to Zerubabel, the governor: “*Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts*” (Zechariah 4:6).
- The oil of God’s Spirit brought a complete (seven) set of lights.

There were two olive trees on either side of that candlestick, providing the oil to the bowl via two pipes.

- The angel said that these trees were the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord (4:14).
- The Hebrew says that they are the “sons of fresh oil,” referring to Joshua (the High Priest) and Zerubbabel. Both had been anointed.

⁴ *The Faith I Live By*, p. 333.

- There is a heavenly application (like the two ark angels) that is incompletely understood.

The oil and the seven flames represented the full expression of the Holy Spirit. Intriguingly, in Revelation the Holy Spirit is labeled “the seven spirits” (Revelation 1:4, 3:1, 4:5, 5:6).

In Revelation 11:4, John also sees two candlesticks, representing two churches that remain of the original seven placed before God (1:26).

- The two churches without any complaints from Christ were Smyrna and Philadelphia (Revelation 2:8-11, 3:7-13).
- On either side of those candlesticks are two olive trees, which represent the source of the oil to keep the flame of each candlestick/church burning bright.

Those candlesticks represent the two ***Spirit-driven witnesses*** who go out to finish the gospel work (Revelation 11:5-7a).

- Their mission and its completion are accomplished by a special endowment of the Holy Spirit “oil” at the end of time!
- This would be commensurate with the “*latter rain*,” when the gospel goes to all the world in preparation for the harvest (Revelation 14:14-16). “*And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped*” (Revelation 14:16).

The duration of this gospel work is even mentioned:

- “*And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth*” (Revelation 11:3).
- The two gospel witnesses are given power from the “oil” or the Holy Spirit.

Here, there are two tree sources for Christ’s two legal witnesses, the number required for a case to move forward (Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:15-21). Elsewhere in this apocalyptic book, the Holy Spirit is represented as “*seven spirits*.” To the messages given to seven churches, Christ ends each with the phrase, “*What the Spirit says to the seven churches*” (e.g., Revelation 2:17) – those seven spirits (1:4).

- A very fascinating illustration regarding Christ, the bleeding Lamb, relates to His eyes:
- “*And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth*” (Revelation 5:6). “Seven” represents a “full expression” or “full complement”!

All these illustrations reveal specific endowments of God’s Spirit for distinct missions to earth at the end of time.

This is further illustrated in the first seal that the “*Lamb*” breaks in Revelation 6:12.

- “And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer” (Revelation 6:2).
 - “white” symbolizes holiness, righteousness, Spirit filled.⁵
 - “horses” represent people on a military mission. Here, God’s people, the 144,000 are represented (Song of Solomon 1:9; Isaiah 63:13; Zechariah 10:3; Joel 2:1-2, 4 – NIV).
 - The “rider” is sitting on the horse, suggesting that it is guiding those individuals – clearly, Christ.
 - A “crown” of victory is given to the rider.
 - A “bow” without an arrow means that it will “hit the mark” – an assurance of victory.

That seven-eyed, Spirit Lamb not only breaks the seals but directs the mission of this group of people (the 144,000) to victory.

An Early Rain Symbol

The oil and Latter Rain noted previously are illustrated in Revelation 11:4-7a. The question then is raised: “Is there any indication of a special empowerment preceding that prophecy, suggesting an early rain?”

- It is found in the previous chapter.
- This is how that narrative progresses:

“And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire” (Revelation 10:1).

The “I saw” heralds a new visionary scene. John is on earth observing a “mighty angel” “coming down” or **descending** from heaven (cf. Revelation 5:2, 18:2).

- From the timing context, this precedes the period of final witnessing and His Second Coming discussed above (11:3-7a).
- This angel’s attributes are similar to those of Christ, described elsewhere by John (Revelation 1:13-15, 14:14-16; cf. Daniel 10:5-6)!

This picture is dramatically **contrasted** with the beast, or Satan’s minions, **ascending** from the bottomless pit (9:1-3, 11:7; cf. 17:8)! Both symbolically **enter earth’s history at its final period**.

- Christ figuratively descends to help His people prepare to finish the gospel work! He also comes to deliver a timing prophecy (unfolded shortly)!

⁵ Beale, G. K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan – 1999), p. 375.

- Satan symbolically ascends from hell to help his people prepare to finish his work (cf. 9:2; cf. 17:8)!

Christ descending is a picture of heaven’s presence approaching planet earth on a **special mission**. It is a “preparation” event for all those who will be end-time witnesses. They will be required to eat (study and understand) (10:10) a special “*little book*.” This suggests an early rain type of preparation experience!

- In Revelation 11:3 is recorded the timing period during which God’s witnesses will evangelize the world. Then in 11:4 the prophecy reveals that those witnesses are being given a full complement of the Holy Spirit – the latter rain.
- The descending of this “*angel*” means a heaven-directed preparation experience!

“We may be sure that when the Holy Spirit is poured out, those who did not receive and appreciate the early rain will not see or understand the value of the latter rain.”⁶ Both are illustrated in these chapters. Both are sequentially needed.

“The blessings received under the **former rain** (early rain) are needful to us to the end.”⁷

Revelation 10 further details this “early experience” required before the witnessing begins!

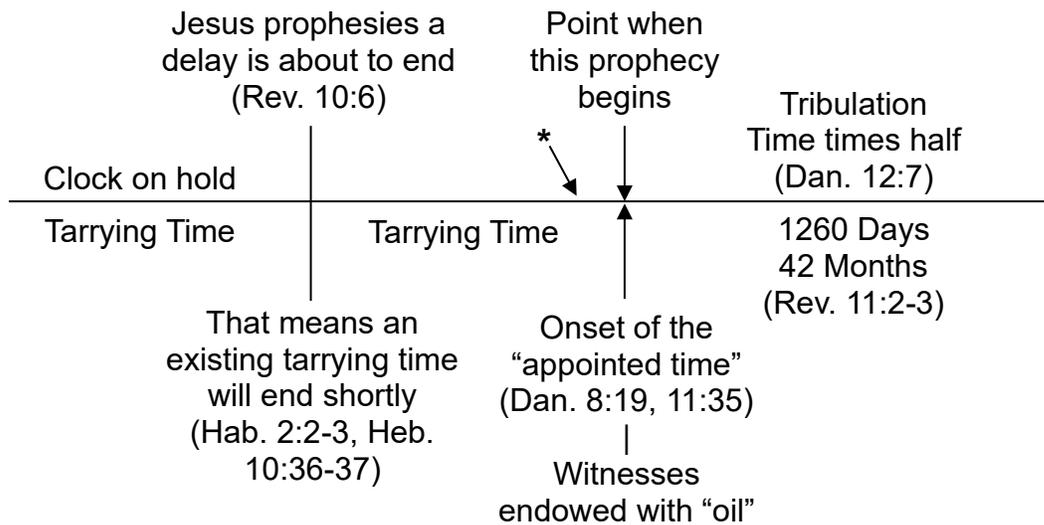
“He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, ... The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer,” (Revelation 10:2, 5-6 – NKJV).

A tarrying time is about to end!

- Note: The KJV does not have the word “*delayed*” in verse 6. More recent translations correctly include that word. A tarrying time or “delay” is about to end.
- “*For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*” (Hebrews 10:37 – KJV).

⁶ *Last Day Events*, p. 195 (TM 399, 1896).

⁷ *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 507-508 (emphasis added).



*The preparation time of this prophecy becomes vitally important. It is a warning that a final preparation must be made preceding the anointing of oil of God's witnesses. It echoes an early-rain experience.

Focus – That Little Open Book

“And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth” (Revelation 10:8).

The “voice” that John originally heard was that of God the Father, asking him to seal up the seven-thunder narrative and not write it down (vs 4). John is in the presence of Jesus, Who is now holding the open book. He observed Christ’s oath and message. Now God the Father gives John this command:

- We are reminded that the scroll remains open in Christ’s hand. Its contents are available to any student, to the church⁸ or even the whole world – for study.⁹
- The unsealed visions of Daniel (*ha hazon* portions) **can now** be understood from that book!

For the third time it is noted that this angel is standing on the sea and the earth. It is a point in time when heaven’s **global authority** is being exercised. **It antedates earth’s last three and a half years** (11:2-3). It also precedes the judgment of the church with its living worshipers (11:1).

John is now to take possession of that scroll and to eat it. It is to become “part of him.”

- To imbibe the Word which had been sealed means that the Spirit’s presence is there to help digest or understand that truth.

⁸ Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 402.

⁹ Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 548.

A sequence that is unfolding:



"And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter" (Revelation 10:9-10).

Just as Angel Jesus predicted:

- Eating it, enjoying its "taste" (its meaning), was wonderful.
- When internalized, it brought bitter opposition and reproach (as seen from Ezekiel's account – Ezekiel 2:8–3:3). The early sharing of this prophecy within the church, the body that should be preparing to give the end-time message, brings resistance that is a bitter experience.

What was in that book?

"John sees the little book unsealed. Then Daniel's prophecies have their proper place in the first, second, and third angels' messages to be given to the world. The unsealing of the little book was ***the message in relation to time.***"¹⁰

Will that message go with power? "*And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory*" (Revelation 18:1).

"The power of God had rested upon His people; they had accomplished their work [Revelation 11:7a] and were prepared for the trying hour before them. They had received the latter rain, or refreshing from the presence of the Lord [the oil], and the living testimony had been revived. The last great warning had sounded everywhere, and it had stirred up and enraged the inhabitants of the earth who would not receive the message."¹¹

"And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (Revelation 10:11).

Heaven's blessings enabled John to understand that book. That knowledge enables John, in turn, to "prophesy" or witness to those who have not yet responded to the gospel.¹² The imperative is global (11:9, 13:7, 14:6, 17:15)!

¹⁰ 7BC, vol. 7, p. 971.

¹¹ *Early Writings*, p. 279.

¹² Aune, David E.; *52B World Biblical Commentary; Revelation 6–16* (World Books; Publisher, Dallas, Texas; 1997), p. 575.

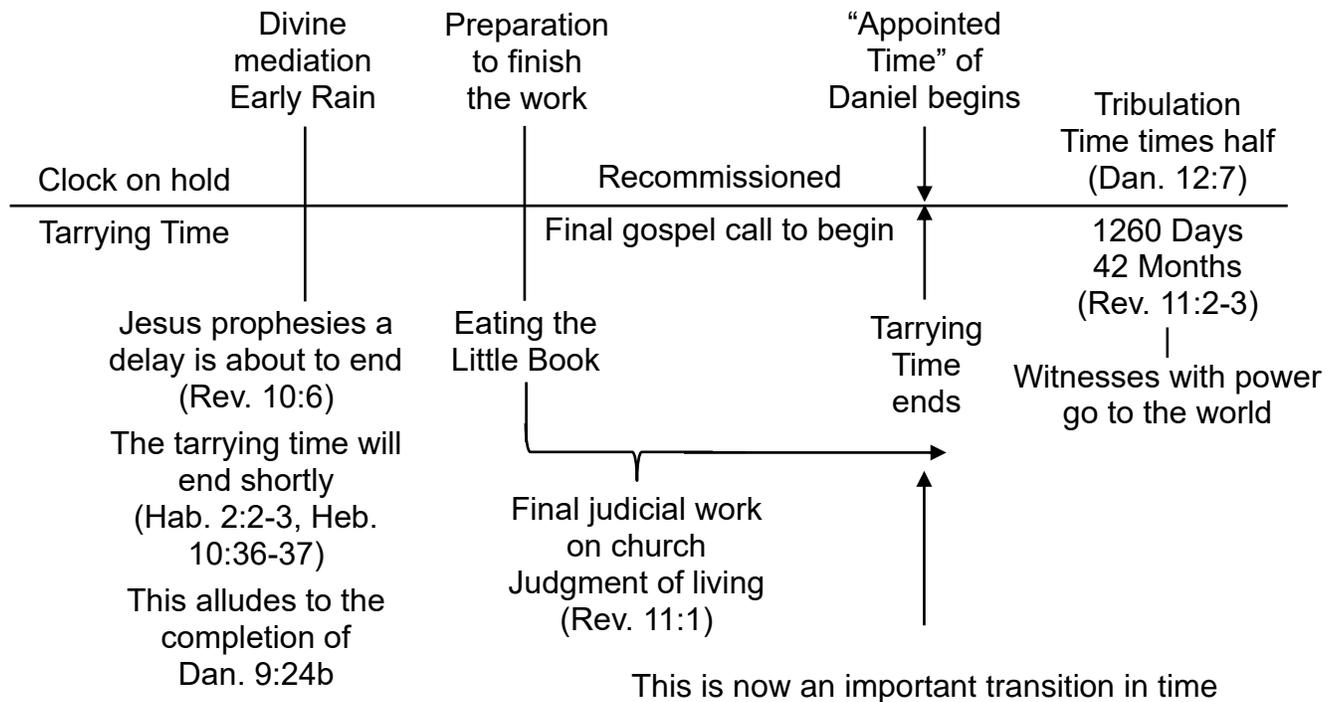
- In all that occurs in this book, God’s Spirit remains the power to effect the commands!
- Even Christ’s mission is influenced by the Spirit (5:6).¹³
- This command implies that that book can not only be understood but that **power to witness**, with its messages, will be given.

This “list” of people in verse 11 is mentioned seven times in Revelation. It alludes to nations in rebellion against God and the need to respond to a final call (11:9, 13:7, 14:6, 17:15).¹⁴

To those individuals, a unique “angel’s message” is to be given:

- “Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Revelation 14:7).
- That, in turn, is the thematic issue within the fourth commandment of the Decalogue. The Sabbath is the sign of the Creator God.

This is all a preparation message to give the world its final warning.



¹³ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 404.

¹⁴ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 405.

The Prophecies of the Last Spirit Manifestations with Power

Peter's famous words to the men of Judah and all those in Jerusalem:

- *“But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, **I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh:** and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams”* (Acts 2:16-17).
- This was likely 31–32 A.D. The first “end” was coming in 70 A.D., when Jerusalem was sacked.

It is also a prophecy for our time, just before the end of history. God's Spirit will be *“poured out”* to those two witnesses.

The outcome:

“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still”
(Revelation 22:11).

The whole world will hear the final gospel invitation and make their eternal decisions (Matthew 24:14). Then Jesus will come!

There will then be two camps: *“Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand”* (Daniel 12:10).

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